

# 2008 CONFERENCE REPORTS

## AFRICA PLANNING COMMITTEE

(Previously known as Africa Task Force)  
Our Covenant with West Angola is Alive and Well

In January, Bishop Peter Weaver led a team of eight people who visited The West Angola Conference. The trip was not without challenges. Thank God for Dot Hollenbeck, the Administrative Assistant to the Bishop, who did not give up the fight when we were faced with visa problems and nearly had to cancel the trip.

After 21 hours in flight and an overnight stop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Bishop Gaspar Domingos met us at the Luanda, Angola airport and whisked us through the customs in less than 30 minutes – only to be delayed for over three hours at the baggage claim, waiting for our luggage! But, we weren't the only ones waiting. As we exited the airport, we were welcomed outside by a choir of both women and men, who had waited in the heat for more than three hours but greeted us joyfully with African songs and lively spirits. It was a moving experience, one that words cannot describe. We felt like celebrities!

Although too numerous to count, some highlights included:

- Meeting with the Governor of Luanda, Job Capapinha, who told us how the country was struggling, but rebuilding with hope, after coming out of a bitter civil war that destroyed the infrastructure. He stressed the key partnership between the church and the government in the rebuilding process.
- Meeting with Mr. Mencia Donrosa, the President of the Council of Christian Church in Luanda. He explained how all the churches were working hard to educate the people about their voting rights and to pray for peace during the elections that will take place this September. Recognizing what is happening in Kenya and Zimbabwe, let us join our prayers that the election process in Angola will be met with peace and hope.  
Touring the new Methodist University, which includes eight floors of classrooms and facilities. The government pays the teachers' salaries at the University an example of the partnerships being forged between government and The United Methodist Church.
- A day of deep sharing with Bishop G. Domingos, conference workers, and many of the pastors at the conference office. Pastors and program staff shared their moving stories about going without salaries for many months, lack of transport to visit their churches and parishioners, and children dropping out of school because they cannot pay tuitions.
- During the visit to the conference center, we were shown pictures of some of the churches and the projects that needed financial help, and in the days following we visited some of these places and projects, including:
- Sao Paulo – formerly an orphanage during the war, now a school and social program teaching vocational subjects like cooking, design, and information technology to more than 520 students in two shifts.

- Bom Jesus, which is translated to “Good Jesus”, where the church has built a clinic and pharmacy for the community. The clinic is ready for operation and only waiting for paperwork and clearance from the Ministry of Health.
- Caxito (pron. Kashito). We saw some projects and educational ministries at this church that needed help in the areas of carpentry, cooking, and sewing.
- A fishing project at Barra Dande. This is a wonderful project that is bringing together the community, The United Methodist Church, and the government.

**Adopt a Pastor Program:**

Our Bishop, Peter Weaver, was able to handover a check worth \$27,000 and some change of which \$8,000 was for the “Adopt a Pastor Program”, which was contributed by some of our churches. On behalf of The Africa Task Force, I would like to thank all of the churches that donated contributions towards this program. However, in discussion with the West Angola Bishop, we learned that it would be more effective for churches in our New England Conference to “adopt a church” and have communication and relationship between the two churches, rather than adopting a pastor. Those who are interested may contact me at 978-897-2211.

More information on the trip and on the Angola Covenant may be found in future issues of Spirit NET, as well as available online at [www.neumc.org/angola](http://www.neumc.org/angola).

Yours in the Service of the Lord,  
Abiot M. Moyo, Chairman

## **NICARAGUA COVENANT**

During our 2007 Annual Conference, a resolution was passed for expansion of partners in ministry and support within the Nicaragua Covenant. It is with joy and thanksgiving that we present both our longstanding and expanded areas of program support for 2008.

**LA IGLESIA DE CRISTO**

**Pastor Pablo Tellez, President**

- Education: Support for 13 teachers in seven primary schools as well as technical scholarships for ten students.
- Nutrition/Lunch Program: Children receive a nutritious meal in the community (barrio) of Las Flores where 75+ children per day are served.
- Self-sufficiency Programs for Women: Two sewing programs and one craft program to teach women a trade in the communities of Managua and Nandasmo.

**EVANGELICAL METHODIST CHURCH**

**Pastor Elmer Zavala, President**

- Nutrition/Lunch Programs: Two programs in the barrios of Carlos Marxx and Santa Teresa serve meals to 100 children per day.
- Medical: The Amanacer Mobile Health Clinic visits some of the poorest EMC communities four times per year.

**NITCA**

**Marcia Gomez, Director**

Rosa Capella, International Relations

- Education: Scholarships are provided for 37 high school, technical, and university students in the impoverished barrio of Los Laureles Sur.

## AMANECER MOBILE HEALTH CLINIC

### **Jairo Lezama, Director**

- Medical: The AMHC is a nondenominational program serving 72 barrios throughout Nicaragua, each four times per year. Medical care and medications are provided for free to communities with no other access to health care. Two nutrition/lunch programs will be initiated in the barrios of Las Cruces and Las Mercedes III.

### MATERIAL AID:

Our container of almost 400 boxes of material aid arrived in Managua the first week in January. This was no doubt a time of celebration. Please continue collecting, and don't forget to include \$15 per box for shipping.

Thank you for your many expressions of faith, generosity, and loving kindness in support of this partnership. It is the extraordinary spirit of the people of Nicaragua and New England that has sustained the Nicaragua Covenant for so many years. As a result of your prayers and your efforts, hope has prevailed and lives have been blessed.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sandy Melius - Nicaragua Planning Committee

## **COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION (CFA) REPORT**

2007 continued to challenge CFA's responsibility to oversee the financial and administrative functions of the Conference. We are cautiously optimistic that the financial instability of our Conference in the last several years appears to have turned more stable. 2007 saw a modification in the number of apportioned mission share funds as well as other modifications to pension and medical funding. With these modifications came concern as to the affects on funding and thus caused CFA to monitor income levels even closer throughout the year. We are pleased to report that these modifications appear to have met acceptable results.

CFA depends immensely on the advice and council of our Conference Treasurer and Director of Administrative Ministries, the Rev. Charles Carnahan. The ability to provide discounts to local churches by the use of ACH (Automatic Clearing House) to forward funds to the Conference, enhancements to banking relations, and in general, bringing the New England Conference up to more current operating systems are some of the results of Rev. Carnahan's recommendations. Further, CFA approved a review of all administrative operating systems of the Conference to insure that we are being good stewards of the time and talent of our dedicated staff, and to insure that appropriate procedures are in place to protect the resources available to us. The results of this review will be received by CFA in 2008.

Oversight of Mission Share Reviews continues to be a responsibility of CFA. While the administration of the application, review of the information/need, and dialog with the local church is the responsibility of the District, it is CFA's task to make final approval. Churches who have been granted relief for 2008 should have been notified through their District and will be reported at the June session. CFA is reviewing current processes in an attempt to clarify previous practices.

Responsible financial planning continues to challenge CFA as it attempts to balance basic expense support for the mission and ministry of the conference with what is believed to

be achievable income from Mission Shares. Significant changes to the apportioned bottom line have taken place in the last several years. It is the goal of CFA to maintain minimal expense increases until it feels fully confident that consistent income is demonstrated.

CFA reviewed RS-216 that was referred to it by the Annual Conference of 2007 and has responded to it. CFA, through a referral at the Annual Conference of 2006, reviewed the possibility of using a tithe as part of our apportionment formula and has provided a response. Both of these responses appear in other documents,

As we conclude this quadrennium, CFA will have changes to its membership and its leadership. Taking a personal moment, I thank those who have served their maximum two four-year terms, those who felt the need to resign during their term, and those who will continue to serve this unique aspect of the Conference. If you are not serving on another board or agency receiving funding through the conference budget, and you feel you might make a contribution to the financial and administrative ministries of our conference, please contact Linda Reiber-Pike, chair of the Conference Committee on Lay Leadership. Lastly, I wish to extend a grateful thank you and commendation to Charles Carnahan and his capable staff for their faithful service to our conference.

Tom Davidson, President

## **CFA RESPONSE TO BISHOP'S FINANCIAL TASK FORCE REFERRAL- 2006 RS - 207A.1**

Among the elements of the Bishop's Financial Task Force's report adopted by the New England Annual Conference in 2006 was this:

That "CFA (the Conference Council on Finance and Administration) request support from local churches in the same way that local churches request support from their members – through tithes and offerings. We [the Bishop's Financial Task Force] propose that churches be apportioned at a rate of 10% of the prior year's gross income with the provision that each District be given latitude to adjust the amount when deemed necessary and appropriate by the District Superintendent, the District Mission Share Review Committee, and/or any other District bodies that might be created in this area on recommendation of the Conference Transformation Team. We recommend that the details of implementation be developed by CF&A in conversation with the Bishop's Financial Summit and other parties that CF&A would deem appropriate."

The Tithe

And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hands!" And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. Genesis 14:18-20

"So now I bring the first fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me." You shall set it down before the Lord your God and now down before the Lord your God. Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house. Deuteronomy 26:10-11

Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. Malachi 3:10

Now as you excel in everything - in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you – so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking. 2 Corinthians 8:7

Scripturally, the tithe has been understood as the “first fruits,” an offering from the faithful people in response to God’s presence and grace with us. While ten percent is the commonly accepted tithe, it is clear from the early faith communities that the tithe was a beginning in responding to God’s blessing; a minimum and not a maximum.

CFA celebrates this Biblical understanding in presenting our tithes and offerings for God’s work through the church.

The New England Conference CFA has studied this method in order to determine a best approach to the desired result. A few other conferences in the connection are only recently moving in this direction, each taking slightly different courses, none having had enough experience to indicate effectiveness of this method. Even though the term “tithe” is used, the percentages which are assessed to local churches in each of these conferences are more than 10%.

#### Conclusions

Implementation of such a Biblical understanding with the New England Conference budget, however, is not practicable at this time.

Our annual conference has experienced major changes in financial organization in the past several years. These changes (especially direct billing for health insurance and pension costs, and the addition of a new Mission Share Fund 4 as second mile giving) have had significant impacts in many churches throughout our connection. We believe that we need to continue to adjust to these impacts and minimize major changes at this time.

The annual conference mission share budget would not be supported by a tithe of “gross income” of our local churches. Initial calculations indicate that an average of 16% of local church income (this varies among our churches) is required to fund our conference mission share budget. While 10% is not understood as a maximum in our giving to God’s work, we think that labeling other percentages as a “tithe” makes the matter unclear.

At this point, to make income and expenditures match (using the tithe method) would require us to cut districts, new church development, and most of our staff. We are required by the Discipline to include our full general church apportionments in our mission shares. The remaining current mission share budget covers district superintending, the Episcopal office, administration, program staff, and some conference level programming. We do not consider these parts of our budget and ministry to be expendable.

While it may seem trite to say, it is true that “tithing begins at home.” As more of our local churches grow in an understanding and experience of proportional giving, a tithe for connectional giving beyond the local church will be sustainable. As we know, whether in our local church budgets or in the annual conference budget, the more significant and complicated dynamic is a spiritual one, a matter of faith not merely of finances.

The current connectional giving method for our conference is equitable and effective. While seemingly more complicated than the tithe, since Wesley’s time the apportionment method of connectional giving has been based on the covenantal (and we believe Biblical) understanding of our mutual participation together based on our gifts (“those to whom much is given.....”). The body image of I Corinthians 12 affirms our essential though different roles in the unity of the body. II Cor 8 says it this way:

“I do not mean that there should be relief for others and burdens for you, but that, as a matter of equality, your present abundance should supply their need, so that their abundance might later supply your need that there might be equality.”

We understand that there is a perception of inequity in the formula that is currently used for Mission Shares (apportionment formula). The current mission share formula needs to be updated, and CFA will recommend specific adjustments in order to maintain the equity of this method and to seek to make it less complicated.

CFA desires to be part of continuing efforts to support stewardship growth in our conference and to help continue to educate leaders in our local churches concerning our connectional giving.

THEREFORE, the New England Conference Council on Finance and Administration recommends to the New England Conference that we continue with an apportionment method of connectional giving for Mission Shares.

FURTHER, the CFA will present at the 2009 Annual Conference session specific recommended changes in the current formula which determines each churches mission share responsibilities.

Note by the Conference Secretary: This report was submitted via the 2007 Pre-Conference Journal as RS-217. It was changed to a report at the request of the Bishop and the action of the 2007 Annual Conference.

## **CFA - RESPONSE TO 2007 ANNUAL CONFERENCE RS – 216 - ON LOCAL CHURCH PENSION COSTS**

Your Conference Committee on Finance and Administration (CFA) appreciates and values the historical concern expressed by the submitters of RS 216 and others who may have similar concerns. CFA has struggled in recent years with its own responsibilities charged to it by the Discipline and the Annual Conference which sometimes seemingly brought us into conflict with the historical connectional concept.

1. Direct Bill programs (including Health Insurance, Pensions, Property Insurance, and Workers' Compensation) are a method of assessing the actual cost of the applicable program in an effort to maintain the connectional benefits that were being jeopardized by for all participants when they were included in mission shares/apportioned funds.

- The Property/General Liability and Workers' Compensation Insurance programs allowed conference and local church units to significantly increase their coverage while lowering their premiums. A strong connectional component of this program leverages the combined values, risks, and claims of all the churches in the Conference to maximize the benefits of coverage. Premiums are based on actual local information.
- The Health Insurance program continues to have some connectional aspects in that a blended rate is still utilized in determining the rate of participants. Further, participants share a portion of the premium. Similarly to the above program, the health insurance program provided the participants and the costs of it are greatly enhanced as a result of the connectional structure of program.
- The Pension program has recently undergone both General and Annual Conference changes. Annual Conference took funding action beginning with 2007 by moving it from being a portion of a Mission Share to a direct bill. This moved most funding from a historical connectional concept to one based on actual local information. This format allows local churches to know the true cost of underwriting their local

ministry. There remains connectional components of the Pension program in that pension benefits for disabled clergy are apportioned and the level of benefits provided to all participants are enhanced.

- It is CFA's observation that the comment in RS 216 that "direct billing (Health Insurance) has resulted in the inability of some congregations to continue ministry at levels needed by their communities." represents only a part of the picture. The direct billing of various actual related costs including health insurance has caused some congregations and the Cabinet to look at other ministry models based on their ability to support such ministry. Some have called this "right-sizing". Where "missional and strategic" appointment decisions are being made, creative ways to support those ministries are being developed.
- It is CFA's observation that the comment in RS 216 that "churches experiencing increases in pension costs are likely to divert available funding from other Mission Share Funds, further impacting the ability of the Annual Conference to provide essential resources to local congregations." has not occurred across the conference. In fact, Mission Share income is up 2% from 2006 to 2007, and Direct Billed Pension income is at a 97% level. All but one district experienced increased Mission Share payment in 2007. Similarly, all but one docile segment of Conference churches experienced increases.

2. CFA is aware of practices in many Districts where churches who have benefited not only from these changes but also from the grace of God, are connected with churches with may not be in the same situation. We commend those Districts and their Superintendents. We encourage all Districts to respond in similar fashion.

Within the last 3 years, in conjunction with the aforementioned changes to in billing practices, CFA and the Annual Conference have implemented a formal mission share review process that has provided more than \$250,000 in relief to churches. CFA continues to be concerned with individual situations where a Mission Share Review may be appropriate. This process is administered by CFA through the Districts and the District Superintendent and District Mission Share Review Committees.

Tom Davidson, President

## **COMMITTEE ON NATIVE AMERICAN AWARENESS**

The Committee on Native American Ministries has had a very good year. We are thankful to all of those persons that donated for the work we are about. This year we were able to fund several works in mission to the Native Community. Some of these include: the Nuweetooun School in Rhode Island, books were purchased for the education of all people and placed in churches and libraries around the conference. Scholarships were given at Camp Mechuwana Bibles were purchased for the Micmac people in Maine.

Many classes were given by Pat Parent, and Oliver Blackfeather Supererant continues his work with teaching in schools and churches and is active in the leadership in the Native Community. There are many people spreading the love of God and the understanding of

Native people, we would be pleased to hear from you and if there are any needs in the community you are in.

The North East Jurisdiction has been helped in their programming as well. The work continues with the aging, prisoners, students in higher education and leadership training. We thank you for your prayers and financial support.

Julia A. Thomas Doutaz, Chairperson

## **COMMISSION ON ARCHIVES AND HISTORY**

The Commission on Archives and History enjoys a close cooperation of the New England United Methodist Historical Society in carrying out its work for the Annual Conference. The fall meeting of both organizations took place in Newburyport, Massachusetts in October. Held at the People's United Methodist Church, the day included a program at Newburyport's Old South Meeting House (now the First Presbyterian Church), with a visit to the grave of Reverend George Whitfield located in the basement of the church. I invite anyone in the congregations of our Annual Conference to become members of the Society. Both groups will meet in November to tour the Conference Archives located at the Boston School of Theology.

In May of last year I was able to represent the New England Annual Conference at the Northeastern Jurisdiction meeting of the Commission on Archives and History. It was held in Cambridge, Maryland, where five United Methodist Churches flourish. An all-day trip for the ninety participants included visits to the Harriet Tubman Museum, the Metropolitan UMC in Princess Anne (built on an old slave auction site), lunch at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (once the Delaware Conference Academy), tour Deal Island and the Joshua Thomas Chapel, and visit Furnace Town. In all, we visited five churches tied to the history of Methodism.

At last year's Annual Conference awards were presented to recognize local church history publications. In all, seven entries were received, with Our Church Heritage (UMC of Westford, MA), The History of Methodism in Northeastern Connecticut, United In Service (Milan Community UMC, NH), and East Bucksport UMC 150th Celebration (Maine) receiving special recognition. The Commission plans to hold another awards program for published histories in the year 2012. Publications made between January 2007 and December 2011 will be considered. Churches in our Conference are encouraged to develop histories about their churches, or some aspect of their congregations. Help is available from the General Commission on Archives and History of the UMC, P. O. Box 127, Madison, NJ 07940.

David White, Chair

## **COMMISSION ON EQUITABLE COMPENSATION**

This year's proposal to bring the 2009 base salary to \$35,350 achieves our goal of bringing the base to 55% of the top 25 salaries in the Conference, based on salary projections for the year 2009, and *an average annual increase of 3.8%*, which is in keeping with prevailing contextual salary increases.

During the past year, the Commission was able to reduce expenses by making use of technology, so the Commission met face-to-face only twice in the past year. Other meetings

were by teleconference. And with the introduction of "fillable" electronic forms we have been able to reduce expenses for paper and postage, which meant that more dollars were available for grants. All applications in 2007 were submitted electronically. We expect that this trend will continue.

**2007 Grant Distributions**

Of the \$185,000 2007 ECC budget, \$178, 450 was expended. Of that amount, 99% was expended for grants and pension payments associated with those salaries. Funds were distributed as follows:

District No	District Name	Grant Amounts	Percent of All Grants
1	Northern Maine	\$25,142	17%
2	Mid Maine	\$12, 816	9.07%
3	New Hampshire	\$5625	3.9%
4	Tri-State	\$21850	15.4%
5	CT/WMA	\$9,455	6.69%
6	Central Massachusetts	\$13,012	9.7%
7	Metro Boston Hope	\$21,509	15.23%
8	RISEM	\$30,082	21.3%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$139,491</b>	
	Pension Payments	\$37,259	

In 2006 we introduced electronic application forms, which have provided more accuracy and greater uniformity in submissions. We will also continue to host Listening Sessions/Learning Center during Annual Conference, since these sessions have helped to improve communication with congregations.

**Seeking help from the Commission:**

Questions about the process, the format of applications or guidelines and suggestions may be addressed to any of the members of the Commission.

Raymond Brady	Steuben ME	207-546-3712	(District #1)
Albert Gibbs	Contoocook, NH	603-746-3020	(District #3)
Cindy Edgerly	Rochester, NH	603-332-4496	(District #4)
Ralph Ellis	Holden, MA	508-829-2384	(District #6)
Laurel Scott	Lowell, MA	978-452-3062	(District #6)
Beverly Blaisdell	Waldoboro, ME	207-832-5127	(District #2)
Chong Wook Choi	Bridgton, ME	207-647-8380	(District #2)
Radames Fernandez	Glendale, MA	978-687-7420	(District #7)

Laurel Scott, Chair

**BOARD OF LAITY/CONFERENCE LAY LEADER**

It is extremely difficult to compress all of the many accomplishments and efforts by the local church laity and lay members of the various committees, task forces and other appointed positions within the allocated space of this report. More accurately, it is impossible. It is with this understanding and concern that we give honor and thanks to all of those many gifted, committed and spiritually motivated laity in the local churches. Although your efforts may not be specifically highlighted in this or other reports, we recognize your value and equal importance for doing the Lord's work.

We have consistently focused our work on the Vision, Mission and Critical Issues of the New England Annual Conference. They are:

**Vision:** "Transformed by the Holy Spirit, united in trust, we will respond to God's call to proclaim Christ boldly to the world."

**Mission:** "Our mission as the New England Conference is to equip, connect and support local, regional and global ministries to make disciples of Jesus Christ and to serve all in His name."

**The Critical Issues are: Spiritual Life, Evangelism and Church Growth, Area Diversity, Equipping Leadership, and Current Apportionment system.**

The aforementioned is addressed through our practices, development of programs and participation in various committees and taskforces. Some of the Board's members will share in their separate reports to the Annual Conference.

The Hope District hosted the second New England Leadership academy on September 22, 2007. Drs. Molly and James Scott were featured in their presentation of their new, very popular book "Restoring Methodism." The Scotts are ordained elders in the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church. They have taught in the Doctor of Ministry Programs of Perkins School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary and Asbury Theological Seminary. They gave outstanding presentations. The workshops received comparable reviews. The workshops were: General Conference: History, Legislative Structure, and 2008 Issues – Rev. Vicki Woods. 21st Century Methodist Youth- Rev. Natalie Wimberly. 21st Century Worship & Music - Mr. Jorge Lockward. Multi-cultural, Multi-ethnic Congregations and SPRC - Rev. Dr. Aida Irizarry-Fernandez.

The third successful Leadership Academy was held by the Connecticut-Western Massachusetts District on October 13, 2007. The workshops were: SPRC, Communication Barriers, Lay Leader, Friendly Church, Pastoral Compensation, Natural Church Success, Spiritual Gift and Creative Worship Ideas.

We hosted the Northeastern Jurisdiction Conference Lay Leaders at the Boston/Burlington Marriott from October 12 – 14, 2007. Bishop Weaver was highly received during his preaching and teaching to the Lay Leaders. Mr. Jorge Lockward provided energetic and involved Christian music. The Rev. Dr. Aida Irizarry-Fernandez was greatly praised in her role as the Spiritual Leader during the Conference.

As a member of the extended cabinet, I attended the Leadership Conference for Extended Cabinets of the United Methodist Church in Lake Junaluska, North Carolina from November 9-11, 2007. Many exciting and provocative workshops and presentations were offered. Several stirring sermons were given. Gil Rendle, Senior Consultant from the Alban Institute presented a paper with a perspective on the current setting and challenge of leadership within the United Methodist Church. He described the United Methodist Church as a managerial system. Additionally, we were given a copy of Rueben Job's recent book, "Three

Simple Rules, A Wesleyan Way of Living.” The rules are: “Do no harm, Do Good, Stay in love with God.”

The following are some of the meetings I attend: Clergy Effective Group, Clergy Sexual Misconduct, proposed Laity misconduct, Anti-Racism, Conference Visioning Table, Africa Task Force, Leadership Committee, Racial Harassment Committee, the Boundaries Committee, Conference Lay representative to the Episcopacy Committee, General and Jurisdiction delegate, Jurisdiction Episcopacy Committee, President of the Jurisdiction Lay Leaders and other short –term committees.

Each year during the preparation and completion of the Annual Report, I am always personally confronted with the hope and prayer that the stated efforts, meetings, et al were focused in making disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. It may sound trite, but our belief and willingness to follow Jesus Christ is more important than all of the policies, procedures and programs we may develop. In retrospect, this shared belief by the “Claity” of New England has supported my ministry as Conference Lay Leader.

Oscar W. Harrell, Conference Lay Leader

## **BOARD OF PENSIONS**

As its name implies, the Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits is responsible for facilitating the health and welfare of clergy, both active and retired. A significant portion of the pension responsibility is handled through the General Board of Pensions, through its administration of the denomination’s various retirement benefit programs. Because the denomination does not mandate a single health insurance plan for all Annual Conferences, health insurance tends to dominate the attention of the Conference Board.

We are aware of the various factors that make providing access to high-quality health insurance to our conference family a challenge. We are happy to report that despite these struggles, health insurance issues have presented us with fewer new challenges in the past year. Still, we recognize that the cost of health insurance creates a financial challenge to all congregations, and are sensitive to desires to keep costs down. Because the design of the Healthflex plan simply spreads actual healthcare costs among all plan participants, the best thing for controlling costs is also the best thing for participants, namely, living as healthfully as possible. Small things, like taking the health risk assessment or adding a brisk walk to one’s daily routine, can add up toward creating a healthier Annual Conference.

Here are some highlights of the Conference Board’s business during the past year.

- The Board and Cabinet have met to explore issues that arise in the appointment process from the mandatory aspects of health insurance. We anticipate that this dialogue will be an important part of the Board’s work in the coming year
- The Board voted to provide a \$100 payment incentive for each participant (including spouses) who has a signed form from their physician stating that they have had a wellness exam.
- The Conference received a rebate from the General Board, due to our positive experience with healthcare expenses. These funds will be used to help hold the line on the blended rate for health insurance (i.e., the amount billed to local churches for the cost of the insurance) and to help replenish depleted reserves.

The Preachers' Aid Society continues to work closely with the Board of Pensions on issues relating to retirees. We are most thankful for their staff and their excellent, supportive, and creative work. We encourage congregations to celebrate the last Sunday in October as Retired Pastors' Sunday and to take a special offering for the Preachers' Aid Society.

We are blessed with excellent conference staff in Charles Carnahan and Janis Salesi and their support staff. Their hard work makes our own efforts seem so easy.

## **VISIONING TABLE**

### **Purpose:**

**The purpose of the Conference Visioning Table is to:**

- ❖ **Support the local church through the sharing of resources, leadership and gifts around a common table aligned to our vision, mission, and critical issues.**

The Visioning Table is directly accountable to the Annual Conference, and serves as the connecting point of voluntary collaboration for vision, mission and ministry in the conference. The Visioning Table may make proposals to the Annual Conference and its boards and agencies.

### **Guiding Principles:**

- ❖ ***Recognize the value of bringing together the various ministries of Mission, Administration and Leadership in the Conference and the ministries in the Districts to resource the ministry of the local church which is the central place of ministry.***
- ❖ ***Be dynamic, adaptable, and fluid allowing for structure to follow function as ministry evolves to meet the current needs of the local church as heard at the Visioning Table.***
- ❖ ***Provide support for the local church by connecting resources among the Districts and across the connection.***
- ❖ ***Explore and encourage innovative, open, and diverse communication methods at all levels of the church.***

The Conference Visioning Table is in its infancy stage with a membership of nearly thirty persons (so far) who are getting to know each other and building a spiritual relationship as the foundation for the work ahead. The team had two meetings on September 28 -29, 2007, February 15 -16, 2008 and a third one planned for April 5- 6, 2008 at Good Shepherd United Methodist Church in Haverhill MA. Although in its infancy stage, the meetings are structured and focused around the conference five critical cross cutting mission issues.

- (1) Spiritual Life***
- (2) Area Diversity***
- (3) Evangelism and Church Growth***
- (4) Equipping Leadership***
- (5) Stewardship***

These five critical cross cutting mission issues represent CVT key leverage focus for supporting, increased and sustained mission and ministry efforts in all our churches across the conference. Such proposed focus has the potential to revitalize and strengthen the membership/structures at the local, district and conference levels. Through our collaboration

and brainstorming we have formulated some essential questions around the issues for which we will seek to develop action steps.

- ✓ **How can CVT promote Natural Church Development definitions, understandings, and model processes for encouraging each other and nurturing our own passionate spirituality (Local Church as Incubator)?**
- ✓ **What can we do to de-emphasize structure/ dying to old patterns and adapt structures influenced by more creativity?**
- ✓ **In what ways could we de-emphasize focus on our church buildings and provide ways for a deeper understanding of stewardship in the church?**
- ✓ **How do we promote church as powerful force in community, mission and evangelism?**

**Conclusion:**

The Conference Visioning Table is committed to allowing the Holy Spirit to guide us in discerning God's will as we collaborate and develop a variety of innovative strategies to support and strengthen the local, district and conference. This focus will enable us to move forward incorporating 21<sup>st</sup> century mission, ministry and the way we conduct business in our churches.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Veta Daley - Chair

## **PREACHERS' AID SOCIETY OF NEW ENGLAND**

The year 2007 marked the 175th anniversary of the Preachers' Aid Society of New England. We celebrated this milestone amid many new ministries and with a wonderful anniversary worship service at the Holy Trinity United Methodist Church in Danvers, Massachusetts. Bishop Weaver was our preacher for the late afternoon service and music was provided by the Boston University School of Theology Seminary Singers. A dinner followed at which we celebrated, among many other things, the publication by our Society of the later writings of one of our beloved retirees, the late Dean Walter G. Muelder.

The last month or two of 2007 brought approval from our Board of Directors for a new experimental dental assistance program to be made available in early 2008 for our retired pastors. We have also initiated a part-time visitation program for our retirees in Florida and additional part-time staff for our New England clergy family services program.

The movement of several retired pastors and their spouses into Preachers' Aid provided housing at Wesley Woods in Gilford, New Hampshire was a very special joy. These small homes on the property of the Laconia-Gilford First United Methodist Church, built in cooperation with the New England Deaconess Abundant Life Communities, will be a blessing to our families for many years to come, especially as the housing market in New England remains in turmoil. We have purchased property and secured Planning Board approval for an additional housing community named Jesse Lee Village in Wells, Maine. The first occupants there should be moving in sometime in 2010.

Our training programs which we collectively call "Planning for a Lifetime of Ministry" continues to be well received by our pastoral families. We now have a well established program carried out in cooperation with the United Methodist Foundation of New England. In

addition, our “Tending the Fire” action/reflection intensive program for active clergy is off to a strong start for its second year with maximum participation.

As in the past, there are many strongly established smaller ministries of the Society to our retired and active clergy. We give thanks for them and for the effectiveness with which our staff carries them out. And we give thanks to our many generous donors/supporters who make this ministry and mission possible. Please remember the Society when you consider your giving, will and bequests and planned giving opportunities such as gift annuities.

For the past six years Mr. C. Arthur Hughes of Wayland has been President of our Board of Directors. Art will be stepping away from the presiding responsibilities this spring, but will, thankfully, remain a member of our Board. We express our thanks to him for the dedication, creativity and compassion which he provided during these years of leadership. The remaining Board members are equally gracious and generous in their support and guidance for the work of the Society.

Finally, words cannot do justice to the exceptional staff and adjunct staff who work with the Preachers’ Aid Society. They are the “hands and feet” of our ministry and, to a person, are talented, committed and faithful in their work for our pastoral families.

Lent 2008

Thomas J. Gallen, Executive Director

## **UNITED METHODIST WOMEN**

In the name of Christ what in the world are we doing about the women and the children? Does that sound offensive? Are we so accustomed to “in the name of Christ” being used in a derogatory way that we wince to hear it in a Christian context?

I worked in social services for many years helping families, mostly women and children, in a variety of ways. There were the forms, the applications, and the qualifications. Were the families needy enough, sick enough, trying hard enough, deserving enough? We helped many families. They appreciated it and it made a difference for them. However, while I could show them the love of Christ, I could not share about Christ’s love for them or help in the name of Christ.

As United Methodist Women we do help in the name of Christ, for Christ’s sake because of Christ’s love for us and for each of God’s children. One does not need to be needy enough, sick enough, trying hard enough or be deserving of God’s love. God loves us all. And a woman doesn’t have to have wealth in resources, position or expertise to study and live the scriptural teachings and to share her love, experience and resources with other children of God. The qualifications to be a United Methodist Woman are to be a woman (or a United Methodist pastor), believe in Christ and want to fulfill the Purpose.

“The organized unit of United Methodist Women shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.”

So, what in the name of Christ are we doing for the women and children of the world? United Methodist Women around the New England Conference are joining women around the world, gathering in groups large and small, to support each other, to study the scriptures, to grow in their knowledge and understanding of Christ’s teachings, to live those teachings by

sharing of themselves and their resources with the women, children and youth of the world. All in the name of Christ.

Blessings,  
Cindy Edgerly



Deaconess Abundant Life Communities, serving seniors since 1889 as the New England Deaconess Association, provides senior living and healthcare communities to meet the changing needs of older adults. Over a century of service has provided Deaconess with a unique perspective which is leading us to expand to meet the growing numbers of older adults that require the accommodations and services we provide. With dedicated staff and excellent facilities, we continue to adapt in order to provide high quality support and care to all of our residents. Our Core Values Statement highlights the foundation for all we do:

Deaconess Abundant Life Communities

**Cares** compassionately for our residents, staff, volunteers, and their families while sharing **Abundant life** with an attitude of joy, hope and commitment;

**Reaching** out to our community with a holistic focus on body, mind and spirit in an

**Environment** which leads to continued excellence and financial strength as we

**Strive** for new and innovative ways to better serve older adults.

We are transforming our present senior living campuses in Concord, Northampton and Provincetown and are expanding in new locations in Gilford, NH and Lincoln, MA. Through these transitions, we continue to honor our heritage on a daily basis by being grounded in our core values and our unchanging commitment to caring and compassionate service. We surround every resident with a sense of abundant life that touches body, mind and spirit. Each of our staff members see what they do as more than just a job. We are called to help to bring fulfillment into people's lives, with whatever challenges they might face. As someone once said, "you may only be one person to the world, but you may also be the world to one person." On a day to day, moment to moment basis, we feel the responsibility we have to each resident and our dedicated to surround them with a love that reflects God's love for them.

This year we opened Wesley Woods in Gilford, NH, where homes are being occupied by retired pastors, church members and folks from the broader community. We also opened Newbury Commons on our Concord campus which offered both market rate and affordable apartments. Also on Concord, The Gardens memory support neighborhood opened to meet the needs of older adults with Alzheimer. In Provincetown, MA Seashore Point opened in May and provides independent living, skilled nursing and outpatient rehabilitation services. In Lincoln, construction is underway for a new senior living community, The Groves, which will provide cottage homes, apartments and affordable rental options. Parkview on the Fells in

Malden, MA continues to be in development and we hope to start construction there this year. At Wesley Woods and at a new project in Wells, ME we are proud to be partnering with Preachers Aid Society to support retired pastors and their spouses.

These new projects are in addition to our ongoing operations, which include the Rivercrest Skilled Nursing Care Center, the Chamberlin Apartments where many retired United Methodist pastors live and enjoy the nurturing environment, Newbury Court Independent living community, and Rockridge at Laurel Park in Northampton, MA.

We are proud of our historical connection with the United Methodist Church and look forward to providing leadership in elder care and ministry within the Conference in the future. Our President and Chief Executive Officer, Rev. Herb Taylor, is providing his leadership to help Deaconess Abundant Life Communities meet the changing needs of older adults into the future. Please feel free to contact us at (978)369-5151 if you have any questions or needs concerning our organization, issues of long term care, or retirement living and we would be glad to assist you.

## **UNITED METHODIST ELDER CARE**

Our mission at United Methodist Elder Care is to “provide a community where older persons can live in comfort, with dignity and a sense of purpose.” We strive to maintain this ideal in an environment of ever changing needs, opportunities, obstacles, and challenges. For the past 37 years, Elder Care has strived to provide services to the elder population in a loving, ethical manner that preserves the honor and respect due all human beings and maintains the dignity of the individual.

In 2007, Linn Health Care Center embarked on a journey called Culture Change. Culture Change is about developing resident-directed care practices; about creating “communities” within a nursing facility. The culture change movement promotes household living environments in congregate settings where elders and direct care workers are able to express choice in meaningful ways. Linn Health Care Center intends to gradually transform our nursing home culture and environment from an institutional/medical model to a person-centered/regenerative culture through self-study, training, team building, staff empowerment and outreach to families. Through a generous Rhode Island Foundation grant, we have begun our transformation through staff training in the basic principles of LEAP. LEAP is a comprehensive workforce development program that empowers staff, increases retention, and promotes staff-resident relationships through a model of person-centered care.

As part of United Methodist Elder Care’s outreach to the community, the staff and residents of Winslow Gardens have made it their mission to spread God’s love, joy and laughter through a Caring Clown Ministry. The Caring Clowns are about God’s sense of humor, giving and receiving God’s love and entering into relationships. They have made visits to adult day care centers, nursing facilities, schools, fire stations, and stop anywhere where they can share the love! Additional outreach to the community includes development of a case management and assessment service as well as inviting the community in to share in our meals program.

We are in the third year of our “Adding Life to Years” Comprehensive Capital and Programmatic Campaign. The Trustees’ advocacy to promote United Methodist Elder Care’s mission and the Campaign by reaching out to the legislative community, the church community and the East Providence community at large, deserves recognition. We have been successful

in completing the capital projects portion of the campaign and we continue to promote the campaign's objectives towards generating five-year program support and endowment for our Chaplaincy Program and Affordable Assisted Living Supportive Housing Program.

One challenge that we know we will have to face in the next few years is locating a source of replacement funding for the Winslow Gardens' Rent Supplement Program. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Rent Supplement Program provides financial assistance to low-income residents by paying a portion of the rent on behalf of the resident. However, the Rent Supplement contract expires in 2011 and without the government subsidy, continuation of this essential program is questionable. This represents a serious loss. We need your support to establish an endowment to provide rent assistance to elderly in need.

During 2007, our Development Director, W. Kathleen Brady, retired. We want to take this opportunity to thank her for eleven years of dedicated service to United Methodist Elder Care. She did a wonderful job with fundraising efforts for this organization, which included raising money through the New England Conference. She will be sorely missed.

We appreciate the continual support of our mission from the local churches and the Conference. Thank you to all who express their support of the Centers through Golden Cross and other donations. Your \$8,510 in Golden Cross dollars during 2007, funded bed reserves for hospitalized residents of Linn Health Care Center, and provided subsidies for personal care, housekeeping, and meal services for Retirement and Assisted Living residents. It has proven to be a valuable and essential service, one that is not often provided by our counterparts in the nursing home industry.

We request that the Conference declare the first Sunday in May of 2009 as Golden Cross Sunday with offerings received to be used to assist residents of the three retirement/health care agencies within this Conference.

Number of Board Members: 28

Number Responding to Report: 17

Number Voting in Favor of Report: 17

## **BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY**

The Book of Discipline sets three overall goals for the ministry of the conference church and society committee (paragraph 682, 1002-1004):

1. Challenge the Conference to be just in how it operates;
2. Work with churches to help them develop responsible social justice ministries;
3. Enable our conference to address the underlying systematic justice issues

Regarding the first goal, we try to monitor, evaluate, and challenge the institutional practices to be more just and fair by participating in the life of the conference and working with other agencies of the conference such as the Cabinet, Board of Ordained Ministry, Resourcing Team and etc.

To carry out the other two goals, we continue to structure our work through the ministries of "Designated Passion" We have nine areas of designated passion. Each ministry is led by one or two members of the committee, who are responsible for organizing and carrying out its ministry. The following is the list of passions:

**Addictions and Prevention Recovery Team – Philip McClintock-** works on the issue of addiction/prevention and offers training workshops and healing and recovery services in the local church

**Economic Justice/Affordable Housing – Gary Richard** – works on the issue of economic justice, especially on affordable housing

**Health Care Justice – Evelyn Johnson Moore**- works for universal health care for all both within the states of New England Conference and at the federal level

**HIV/AIDS- Donna Costa**- works on the issue of global HIV/AIDS, especially on United Methodist Global AIDS fund

**Labor Justice/Workers’ Right – Laurel Scott**- advocates for workers’ right and the labor justice

**Mental Illness/ Homelessness – Pam Brown**- brings awareness to the issue of mental illness in the local churches and advocates for the right of the mentally ill

**Middle East Justice/ Divestment – Bill Aldrich**- works on the issue of just peace in Palestine-Israeli relation

**Reconciling Ministry – Marion Grant** – works on challenging the conference on the issue of inclusiveness, especially on the issue of sexual orientation

**Climate Change Task Force – Valerie Bell** – works on implementing the Climate Change Resolution passed in 2007 annual conference

Anyone who is interested in any of the above areas of justice ministry is welcome to join one or more of these passionate ministries.

In 2007, the conference was blessed to have **Rev. Michael Clark** as our new Peace with Justice Coordinator and **Valerie Bell** as Environmental Justice Coordinator. Rev. Clark has been in the front of making just peace both in our nation and in the world throughout his ministry. Valerie Bell is a member of UMC who has been teaching and leading her community in fighting global climate change. The conference will grow in these important ministries through their faithful and effective leadership in coming years.

**Willard Robinson** continued to be our liaison to General Board of Church and Society. Willard has continued his work on teaching Social Principle in local churches.

Hearing the outcry of people who are suffering because of injustice and oppression and working to bring justice in our church and in our world is not an option but a calling for all Christians including United Methodists. We invite all in the New England Conference to be the voice for the voiceless, the power for the powerless, and the hope for the hopeless.

We Chang, Chair

## **COMMISSION ON RELIGION AND RACE**

The **mission** of the Commission on Religion and Race is to assist the Annual Conference in fulfilling its purpose. That statement is found in The Book of Discipline (2004-Par. 601): “...to make disciples for **Jesus Christ** by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all to the **glory of God.**” The Commission has another mandate as an agency of the Annual Conference (Par. 604) “...each annual conference shall act in all respects in harmony with the policy of the United Methodist Church with respect to **elimination of discrimination.**”

In regard to the Annual Conference, the Discipline tells the Church that, “Attention shall be given to **inclusiveness.**” (Par. 605.3) In the section on responsibilities of Connectional Ministries (Par. 607.5, 6) we find these words, “... developing and strengthening **ethnic**

**ministries**, including **ethnic local churches and concerns**; providing **monitoring functions** to ensure that the church is consistent with its stated values.”

The Commission on Religion and Race is an **Agency of the Annual Conference**. One of the responsibilities of the Commission is to assist the conference in maintaining the connectional relationship of the local church, district, and conference with the general agency; in this case, the General Commission on Religion and Race. The annual conference is charged with “**monitoring to ensure inclusiveness**-racial, gender, age, and people with disabilities-in the annual conference.” (Par. 609 & 609.1)

It is required by the Discipline (2004-Par. 642), that each Annual Conference **shall** have a Commission on Religion and Race (CORR). Our conference has had a commission since the body was first mandated for the national, jurisdictional, conference, and local church levels at the 1972 General Conference. Our NE Annual Conference and its predecessor conferences’ commissions have been faithful in providing leadership in some form through the years for nearly all of the 16 responsibilities outlined in the Discipline.

In spite of the efforts of the CORR, it is unfortunate for the Annual Conference and the CORR that the current conference leadership “climate” has not been as supportive of the CORR as in previous years. It appears that the area of diversity has become less important. As a result, the Commission feels strongly that its work has been disregarded as its leadership struggles to maintain a passion for the ministry to which we are called.

With these and other important concerns in mind, we make the following requests:

1. That the reports of the Annual Conference agencies be given priority in the time allowed for presentations on the floor of the conference session. (Par. 605.4)
2. That each District Superintendent accept responsibility for having a district director of religion and race who would be a member of the commission. (Par. 642.2).
3. That the commission shall have a minimum of twelve non ex-officio members. (Par. 642.2) We ask that these members be placed in classes.
4. That the annual conference leadership assist the commission in fulfilling the requirement of having at least one joint session per year with representatives of other conference boards and agencies (Par. 642.3e).

We give thanks to God for each of you who has a heart for the ministry of Religion and Race and invite anyone who is interested in working with us or who would like to learn more to contact one of the members and/or volunteer through the conference committee on leadership. We value the vision of everyone! The list of members is found in the front of the conference journal. This ministry is urgent and ever continuing, and reminds us all, that “**Diversity is a Gift of God.**”

Faithfully yours

## **ANTI-RACISM STEERING COMMITTEE**

This group was formed a few years ago in order to provide coordination and oversight throughout our conference structure in the ongoing work of dismantling racism and white privilege. Represented among our members are persons from the Board of Laity, Religion and Race, Board of Ordained Ministry, Conference Cabinet and Staff, and other leadership.

We meet regularly in person and by telephone conference. Most recently, two significant areas of concern have headed our agenda: cross racial/cross cultural appointments (CC/CR), and anti-racism training for conference leadership (lay and clergy).

Our Conference Religion and Race Commission has done work in the CC/CR matter and we support their efforts and hope to work with the Cabinet to improve our resourcing and support in this critical area. We also are planning more regular anti-racism training events for Cabinet, BOM, BOL, conference staff, district committees on ministry, and leadership of conference level boards and agencies.

Members: Ernest Belisle, Maria Coleman, Eric Dupee, Lisa Fagerstrom, Aida Fernandez, Oscar Harrell, Yong Ja Kim, Wendell Luke, Bonnie Marden, Jim McPhee, Jung Sun Oh, Don Rudalevige, Vicki Woods.

## **STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE RESPONSE AND INTERVENTION TEAM**

The purpose of the steering committee is to coordinate, implement and oversee the work of the Response & Intervention Team and to implement strategies and policies in the area of prevention and education.

The Steering Committee is composed of representatives from the Cabinet, Board of Ordained Ministry, Board of Laity, Parish Consultant Team, Bishop's Assistant, Communications Director, Conference Chancellor (attorney), Response & Intervention Team, and Survivors.

During this past year the Steering Committee has addressed the following areas:

- Revising the Manual for Responding to Clergy Sexual Misconduct.
- Updating the conference policy on Clergy Sexual Ethics. The final revision awaits General Conference rulings.
- Organizing a task force to develop a lay misconduct policy for the conference
- Updating the local church brochure on "How to Receive Help in the Event of Sexual Misconduct in the Church"

As David Baird stepped down from this Steering Committee, we are deeply appreciative for the time, energy, and expertise he has shared within this committee. We are thankful that he continues to be involved in the direct work.

Respectfully submitted,  
Evelyn Johnson-Moore, co-convener

## **GLOBAL AIDS COMMITTEE**

Heartened by the action of the 2007 Annual Conference session to suspend the rules and receive a special offering for the Global Aids fund, the committee celebrated the receipt of more than \$3,000 and acknowledged that much work remained to be done.

Meeting in the summer of 2007, our committee established guidelines for grants to ministries that serve people with HIV/AIDS within the geographic boundaries of the New England Annual Conference.

From the 25% of funds donated to the Global AIDS Fund in 2006, the committee granted more than \$600 to the Afia Center, based at the Mathewson Street UMC, Providence, RI, and operated by Family Services of Rhode Island.

In the fall of 2007, the committee made special efforts to provide churches with resources to plan worship services and other events to remember World AIDS Day, on December 1, 2007.

We began our "Spread an Epidemic of Giving" Campaign in February 2008. The purpose of the project is to reach our goal to have at least \$1 being contributed for each member of all the United Methodist Churches in the New England Annual Conference. At the end of 2007, about \$18,000 had been donated to the Global AIDS Fund from churches and individuals in our conference. To reach our goal, an additional \$77,000 is needed.

Steps include:

- Thanking the individuals and congregations who have already contributed;
- Encouraging donors to spread the word to lay and clergy colleagues and challenging them to receive an offering or hold a special event by the end of 2008;
- Publishing articles in Catalyst and on the conference website with information, liturgical resources and statistics;
- Promoting special events, such as the Black Church Week of Prayer, Women and HIV Awareness Month, National HIV Testing Day, etc.
- Working with Cape Cod UMC's on an Epidemic of Giving campaign for summer 2008; and
- Sharing "It Worked for Us" stories.

We hope to report at the June 2008 Annual Conference that this Epidemic of Giving has resulted in a substantial increase of contributions to the Global AIDS Fund through May, 2008. We will need a few good circuit riders and other word-spreaders to bring the news of the Global AIDS Fund to all corners of the New England Annual Conference, so that we can reach and perhaps surpass our goal of \$97,000 by Dec. 31, 2008.

Respectfully submitted by

NEAC Global AIDS Committee, Co-conveners Donna Costa and Lester Bennington, and members: Leigh Dry and Marion Grant

## **RECONCILING MINISTRY COMMITTEE**

The Reconciling Ministries Committee celebrates that 31 United Methodist Churches in our annual conference are reconciling congregations. Among these, Lebanon UMC, Lebanon, NH and Bethany First, Roslindale, MA voted to become reconciling congregations in 2007.

The Reconciling Ministries Committee hosted a gathering on March 24, 2007 at The United Parish of Auburndale. The event, Holy Hope: Committing to the Future of an Inclusive UMC, included presentations by panelists Troy Plummer, Executive Director of Reconciling Ministries Network; Kathryn Johnson, Executive Director of Methodist Federation for Social Action; Gil Caldwell, United Methodists of Color for a Fully Inclusive Church; Cathy Knight, Executive Director of the Church within a Church Movement; and Diane DeLap, Affirmation. The Rev. Martin D. McLee delivered the keynote address. At Annual Conference 2007, the Reconciling Ministries Essay Award was given to Karen Hatch, a Senior at Danvers High

School and a member of Holy Trinity UMC, Danvers, MA. Her essay, "My Vision of a Fully-Inclusive United Methodist Church." was distributed to clergy and lay delegates. At each of the 4 quarterly meetings, a report was received on the activities of the Retired Reconciling Clergy group in our annual conference, which has been a model for retirees in other annual conferences. A Reconciling Worship service will be held early Friday morning at this year's Annual Conference; rainbow stoles will be sold; and a workshop, Continuing the Faithful Witness of Reconciling in the New Quadrennia, will be facilitated by members of the Reconciling Ministries Committee.

Susan Morrison and MaryAnn Haxton, Co-chairs

## **UNITED METHODIST MEN**

It has been several years since there has been any semblance of a Conference United Methodist Men's organization.

That is soon to change. There is lots of exciting men's ministries in many of our churches throughout the New England Conference. In addition, there are several chartered groups as well as many interested in doing so. Others want to engage in exciting Christian ministry.

Over the next several months there will be a concerted effort on the part of several men to organize a conference organization for men in New England. The new organization will be structured in a way that will empower men to engage in ministry for Spiritual growth, Evangelism and Mission (EMS).

We want men's ministry to encourage Evangelism Mission and Spiritual growth in the local church. There will be district and conference men's gatherings that will feature hands on mission projects as well as exciting training opportunities.

We will endeavor to uplift existing UMC ministries such as Lay Speaking, Upper Room UMCOR, and Walk to Emmaus as well as expand our cooperative efforts with the Society of St. Andrew.

Please become part of our effort as we engage men in Christ's work in the local church, New England and the world.

Please visit our New England Conference United Methodist Men's website at [www.neumm.org](http://www.neumm.org)

The General Commission United Methodist Men's website is [www.gcumm.org](http://www.gcumm.org)  
You may call 207-882-6592 for additional information.

Del Ketcham, writing for several interested men.

## **DISABILITIES COMMITTEE**

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
And the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
Then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
And the tongue of the speechless sing for joy." Isaiah 35:5-6a (NRSV)

The Committee on Disability Concerns would like to thank the Lay Leadership Committee for their help in getting members this year. By Discipline, we still need people with mental disabilities.

Most of our work concentrated on Annual Conference in our only meeting prior to this report. The Committee feels although the Annual Conference parking issue was addressed that it was not resolved as it reoccurred last year. Apparently, the Gordon College staff were not aware of the change we agreed to in session and upheld rules they previously knew. This is being discussed with ex-officio member Bonnie Marden, our Conference Planning Team liaison.

We need to increase our sensitivity to the delegates. The type and location of housing depends on each delegate's requirements; workshops should be accessible to the handicapped. Having workshops buildings only accessible by stairs and rooming delegates in wheelchairs in buildings on the hill are not practical.

There has been an on-going issue about delegates in the back not being able to be seen by those presiding. Some of these are wheelchair bound and might be able to move forward in front of the stage. Signage has also been put out reserving seating for the disabled over the last couple years and a significant number are not aware of this. As people come up to use these seats and wheelchairs roll forward, we will have more seating capacity available in the pews to be used. This will decrease the number in back. Improved communication of our services offered is the only answer. The large screen helps the majority of visually handicapped people. However, delegates who are totally blind still needs to be addressed.

The speed with which individuals can go through the line and the ease in accessing the meals makes box lunches the committee's preference. The Committee has recommended to Sessions that there be more box lunches.

The Committee would love to get a sign language interpreter every session. Having individual listening devices and volunteers to help the sight impaired understand what is happening at services and sessions. We recommend a change in the customary church service by either serving communion to the disabled at their seat or help them come forward, whichever they prefer. Our concern is that some may not be able to easily do so and remain in their seat. The Conference may inadvertently be hindering the full participation of some delegates whenever they are asked to move in any service.

As your church is a part of the conference, we will survey how well your church buildings meet the needs of the disabled upon request. What you do with our findings is up to you. While there have been no requests to date, we are anxiously awaiting hearing from churches in the conference on this. We hope some day to do every church.

Did you know the Board of Trustees has a Parsonage Accessibility Improvement Fund with \$100,000 according to the 2004 Conference Journal? Did you know some groups will charge little or nothing to look at how to make your church accessible hoping for business later?

Many organizations that will help you reach the handicapped can be found by clicking on "Church Resources" at [www.neumc.org](http://www.neumc.org) and choosing "Disability Resources." Thanks to the Disabilities Task Force for this. We will be adding more to it.

Did your church remember its pledge last year in the resolution we passed to help the disabled? We should renew this challenge with ourselves yearly!

Although our title is 'conference,' we serve all levels of the church. By Discipline, we are to help you become more aware of how to meet the needs of congregants with disabilities at all levels and be a resource for help in your programs.

We are looking at all disabilities simultaneously and have much work ahead that will only be possible with time, effort, and your input. Thank you very for your help and we look forward to working with you.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Michael McShane

## **BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY**

The Board of Ordained Ministry is committed to serving our Lord Jesus Christ through the New England Annual Conference. We continue to work with a Co-chair structure for the full board and all of our major committees. This year we accepted the resignation of Board Co-chair Wesley Palmer. We thank Wesley for his faithful leadership and visioning. Bishop Weaver appointed Lynn McCracken to Co-chair the Board with Ernest Belisle.

We continue to work with the Cabinet to develop an evaluation tool for Transformational Pastoral Leadership. The evaluation was used across the Conference in the past year. We received feedback from many churches regarding the length of the evaluation and what was described as the subjectivity of the document. We met with the Bishop and the Cabinet in February and agreed to evaluate and work on the document, and to develop a process for intervention when a member is identified as ineffective.

The Entrance Committee is working to analyze and make changes in the examination process to bring it into line with transformational pastoral leadership. New reference forms, to be completed by District Superintendents, for candidates have been developed. We continue to wrestle with the issue of decreasing numbers of full time appointments in New England. There are some individuals who have passed the Board exam but have been unable to receive full time appointments, therefore they cannot be commissioned. If they cannot be commissioned then they are to continue reporting to their District Committees on Ordained Ministry for annual review. If after three years they still do not have an appointment, they must begin the process over again. It was noted that some of our candidates who did pass the exam have received appointments in other annual conferences.

The Board continues to focus on dismantling racism. We have a committee that leads us through anti-racism/white privilege workshops each time the Board meets. They have provided a depth of insight about the issue through books and other resources.

In 2008 the Board will face a transition as the new quadrennium begins. Bishop Weaver in consultation with the Board Co-chairs will make appointments to the Board.

We appreciate the leadership of Bishop Weaver and his willingness to work with us. We are grateful for the many gifts that our Registrar, Susan Evans, brings to the Board. We look forward to our shared ministry in the new quadrennium of the New England Annual Conference.

Lynne McCracken – Co-Chair

## **SPIRITUAL FORMATION INITIATIVE**

“O taste and see that the Lord is good.” Psalm 34:8

“Taste and See” is a wonderful theme for the work of the Spiritual Formation Initiative this past year. “Taste and See” is the name of the retreat experience that provided the content for the “Retreat in a Box” resources that we distributed to each district superintendent at annual conference to be used by churches on their districts. Each ordinand received a box as well. Through this resource and our other efforts we hope that folks in the New England Annual Conference will find renewing ways to taste and see that the Lord is good.

This year, we have continued to spread the word about spiritual formation resources through brochures, a breakfast at the Annual Conference session in June, and the conference website. With our prayers and presence, we support the ministries of Rolling Ridge and the Tending the Fire program of the Preachers’ Aid Society. With our time and talents, in addition to the “Retreat in a Box”, we have sponsored the Clergy Spiritual Formation retreat and the Bishop’s Day on Passionate Spirituality (with a number of our members leading workshops), both in March.

For 2008-2009, we plan to offer or are exploring the following:

- Five-Day Academy for Spiritual Formation, October 26-31 at Marie Joseph Spiritual Center in Biddeford Pool, ME. This year’s theme is Passionate Spirituality: Global Context, Bold Witness. Our faculty members are Valerie Bridgman Davis and Juan Bek.
- Mentoring support for active clergy.
- Retreat Leaders’ training
- Resourcing youth spiritual formation

If you have ideas, comments, and questions about our work, and/or would like to become involved, please contact Larry Peacock ([RevLPeacock@rollingridge.org](mailto:RevLPeacock@rollingridge.org) - 978-682-8815) or Wanda Stahl ([stahl@neumc.org](mailto:stahl@neumc.org) - 978-682-7676 x. 221). We are seeking to broaden our membership!

Folks who have been part of our work this past year include: Yoo Yun Cho-Chang, Susan Ellery, Cheryl Gates, Cynthia Good, Don Hegeman, Seok Hwan Hong, Sam Johnson, Cathy MacGovern, Susan MacKenzie, Larry Peacock, Joyce Ringleb, and Wanda Stahl.

## **CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

The Conference Congregational Development Committee is the board charged with coordinating and resourcing the development and growth of the congregations of the New England Conference. This is a huge effort involving almost every aspect of our Conference, so the Committee’s work is primarily focused through its sub-committees:

- New Church Committee
- Local Church Transformation Committee
- Urban Ministries Committee
- Town & Country Ministries Committee

We also collaborate with our related Office of Congregational Development and Parish Consulting Network.

A continuing focus of our work is our annual New England School of Congregational Development. In 2007 our theme was “E3: Empower, Equip, Evangelize.” We gathered in Portland ME with hundreds of church leaders from throughout our Conference, and it has been gratifying to see the fruits of greater ministry that this time of learning and inspiration has produced in those that participated. In 2008, our school will be held in the Springfield MA area with the theme “Walk on Water.” We are looking forward to hearing keynotes from Paul Nixon (author of “I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church”), preaching from Safiya Fosua, and Bible study led by Gwen Purushotham. Information on other plenary presentations, dozens of workshops, and registration options will be available in June.

This year we are transitioning out two key leaders in our Congregational Development teams. Ed Deyton has served for the past several years as chair of the Congregational Development Committee. Ed’s careful leadership and advocacy has guided us through several key transitions, and he will be missed. Additionally, Hailani Chan-Williams is stepping out of his role as chair of the New Church Committee at this Annual Conference. Hailani has made a profound contribution to our Conference’s new churches, and we send him with our prayers and blessings as he continues ministry in a new region. Our leaders make a difference as they so freely share their God-given gifts with our congregations, so we offer here our many thanks to Ed, Hailani, and all of you who have shared your time and gifts through congregational development ministries.

## **DIRECTOR OF CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Congregational Development is a holistic approach to the development and growth of a congregation’s ministries, participation and impact on its community and world. Merging the studies of missions, evangelism, leadership, discipleship, and organizational development, Congregational Development seeks to extend the Gospel of Christ by supporting the work of congregations of Christians in their core tasks of making more and better disciples and having a greater and deeper impact on the world.

My work in Congregational Development is organized into three areas, depending on the lifecycle of the congregation. Local congregations were not created to last forever, and they move through regular cycles of growth, leveling off, decline, and revitalization. My Office of Congregational Development is concerned with:

- a. starting new churches,
- b. supporting and revitalizing existing churches, and
- c. shepherding churches in decline and crisis.

In the recent past, our New England Conference has had a lot more work in shepherding declining churches than it has had in starting new churches. I believe that we are beginning to see some signs of a turn around, but it is too early to tell with any degree of certainty.

This year I have been more focused on building our leadership teams related to congregational development. Over the past two years we have greatly expanded our efforts with programs such as Natural Church Development, G2G Churches, District Congregational Development Teams, the Church Viability Assessment Process, and an accelerated New Church Starts effort. We have outgrown our leadership systems, so I have been focused on supporting and expanding our leadership teams. I am deeply grateful for the hundreds of lay and clergy leaders that are involved in our efforts to develop our congregations. Joining our

hearts and hands to one another and to God is the only way into a future of vital, growing, powerful ministries that are transforming New England and the world. If you would like more information about how you can get involved in helping your congregations or other congregations in our Conference, please contact me at [curtis@neumc.org](mailto:curtis@neumc.org). And thank you.

Curtis Brown

## **URBAN MINISTRY COMMITTEE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ON CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The Urban Ministry Committee serves as an advocate for urban and inner-city congregations and ministries of the annual conference. Committee members are clergy and lay urban ministry practitioners representing many of the major cities of the annual conference. In the past year the urban ministry committee has organized regional meetings for the purpose of mutual support, planning events and carrying out administrative responsibilities.

A significant effort undertaken by the committee since the 2007 annual conference concerns a pilot grant making process which resulted in the distribution of \$105,000 in funding to urban congregations and ministries within the conference. The 2007 grant recipients were as follows: Urban Mission Training Project (\$6000), Spiral Arts, Portland, ME (\$20,000), Worcester Area United Methodist, Worcester, MA (\$17,800), Central United Methodist Church, Brockton, MA (\$8000), Christ United Methodist Church, Lawrence, MA (\$10,000), Mathewson Street United Methodist Church, Providence, RI (\$20,000), Open Table UMC, Providence, RI, (\$15,000) and Union United Methodist Church, Boston, MA (\$9,000).

The committee looks forward to receiving requests for proposals for the 2008 urban ministry grant process. Funding will be made available based in the revenue received by the committee from conference investments held in trust for urban ministry. The committee will also be evaluating ministries funded in 2007 for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges related to urban and inner-city congregations and ministry.

Urban Committee members Gary Richards and Garvin Warden have continued to represent the annual conference on the Northeast Jurisdiction Urban Network. The Network is currently developing plans for a Fall 2008 jurisdictional gathering of urban ministry practitioners. More information on this event will be provided as it becomes available.

## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

(Combined with Board of Global Ministries of the New England  
Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church)

We met six times during the year on the second Saturday of January, March, May, July, September, and November. Meetings generally run from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. During the time in-between meetings, we email and phone weekly and sometimes teleconference.

We work to conserve, protect and administer the funds, monies and properties held in trust for the Annual Conference, its Churches and Agencies. During the course of the year we collaborate with laypeople, pastors, and at district gatherings to resource or clarify fiduciary issues related to the Conference or the local Churches. We are grateful to sub-committees and task forces which also meet to bring about the fulfillment of mission through our five critical areas: leadership, spiritual passion, facilities, stewardship of resources and tools for ministry in the 21st Century including: Disabilities and Environmental Task Forces, Camp Sites, Insurance, Investment, Pensions and Scholarship Committees. The reports of these groups are elsewhere in the Annual Conference Report.

There is currently \$1,000,000 from the Abandoned Property Fund that is available to local church ministries for Missional use. It is not the duty of the Trustees to decide how to distribute the money, but rather, to hold it in trust. To seek money from these funds, please speak with your District Superintendent.

The Trustees hold in trust, as of 2006, the following:

Permanently Restricted Funds, 33 - \$ 4,334,468

Temporarily Restricted Funds, 1 - \$ 155,693

Unrestricted Funds, 252 - \$ 15,442,765

We use money from three funds for our work. In total the funds available to us beginning January 1, 2008 for maintaining, repairing and purchasing conference owned homes and properties is \$1,069,790. Extensive work was done at the following properties: Holden, MA, Rolling Ridge Conference Center, new septic at Salem, NH, extensive clean up of 276 Essex Street. We seek a new parsonage for Camp Aldersgate this year, as well as continued work to provide separate offices from the homes of District Superintendents.

We gratefully hold in trust a new piece of land for Grace UM Mission in Hopkinton, Massachusetts. This was donated by Mr. Lindsay, who died weeks after the donation was received. We give thanks for servants who give in life and also, those like Mr. Lindsay who give beyond life.

We sold one property since the 2007 Annual Conference, a parsonage from St. Paul's in Lowell, MA.

The following Grants were awarded since last Annual Conference:

\$747.50 for Grace UMC, W. Stewartstown NH

\$2,500 for Hillsboro UMC, Hillsboro, NH

\$3,500 for Cuttyhunk UMC, MA

\$2,000 for High Street, Duxbury, MA

\$500 for Windsorville, Windsorville, CT

\$2,500 for Trinity, Springfield, MA  
\$1,000 for Marshfield, Marshfield, MA  
\$2,500 for Corinth, Corinth, ME  
\$2,500 Christ UMC, Kingston, RI  
\$2,500 Richmond, NH  
\$2,500 Mittineague W. Springfield, MA

Each Rhode Island church toward meeting fire compliance codes

We awarded Stowell scholarships to visit the Holy land to three persons for a total of \$ 7,100.00.

To date we have outstanding loans to churches totaling \$1,051,939. Loans were awarded to the following churches since we last met at the 2007 Annual Conference:

\$40,000 Wesley UMC, Falmouth, MA  
\$70,000 East Saugus, MA  
\$16,000 Round Pond UMC, ME  
\$40,000 Heritage UMC Braintree, MA  
\$15,000 for Rehoboth, MA  
Boston Community Loan

Legal work is a constant. We finalized a filing to make Bill Hewig, Esquire, our Annual Conference contact agent for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We are working on a lease of 566 Commonwealth Avenue in Boston. We resolved multiple issues that pop up from the former conferences and abandoned properties.

It is our pleasure to serve in this capacity. We appreciate your feedback and look forward to the collaborations you and God's Spirit will bring about.

In Gratitude,  
Amy Alletzhauser, President

## **THE INSURANCE COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

The Insurance Committee of the New England Conference Board of Trustees will have met three (3) times since the last annual conference to monitor the Conference Unit Insurance Plan. For the period 8/1/2007- 7/31/2008, Utica Mutual Insurance Company will be our new primary insurer, providing coverage for Property, General Liability, Crime, Automobile and Excess/Umbrella Liability as well as our Workers' Compensation coverage that renewed in January 2008. Fred C. Church Insurance of Lowell, MA continues as the Conference's broker, providing you service on claims, loss prevention, risk management and general insurance questions.

Utica Mutual was chosen after an extensive national renewal marketing competition which began in late March 2007 when we learned that Acadia Insurance Company had chosen not to renew the program with the Conference. Acadia's primary reasons for this decision were catastrophic loss concerns – natural disasters and over the past 5 year experience of claims vs. premiums had been unfavorable and unprofitable for Acadia. They did not feel they could continue as the Conference insurer without major increases in premium and a significant reductions in coverage, neither of which would be an acceptable alternative.

The Insurance Committee worked very closely with our broker, Fred C. Church Insurance, to seek the best alternative. Initially, we identified nine insurers as potential candidates. Six of these insurers were eliminated for a variety of reasons – unable to be competitive on premiums, unwilling to offer key coverages such as sexual abuse and molestation, requiring massive amounts of individual church underwriting information which we didn't have and didn't want to burden churches with, or unable to provide the high levels of service to which we as a Conference have become accustomed with Acadia. With three finalists (Utica Mutual, Philadelphia Insurance and PACT – the General Conference captive insurance company) Fred C. Church and the Insurance Committee negotiated effectively on the churches behalf. In the end, we selected Utica Mutual because they committed to the lowest premium, the broadest coverages, the best claims and risk management services given their significant presence here in New England and a strong commitment to provide coverage for every Church in the Conference, which was becoming an issue with Acadia. We are very enthusiastic about our new partnership with Utica Mutual and look forward to a long term relationship with them.

The average increase to all local churches for the 2007/2008 year was 5.4% compared to 13% and 17% increases that occurred during the past two years.

In this coming year, both Utica and Fred C. Church will be working throughout the Conference to improve the accuracy of our replacement values. Utica has a goal of visiting all churches in the Conference this year, to do risk management reviews as well as replacement value appraisals.

As an ongoing process, all outstanding claims are reviewed periodically during the year with Fred C. Church and Utica. Also, we will continue to monitor all outstanding claims prior to August 1, 2007 with Acadia Insurance Company.

The Insurance Committee continues to monitor local church payments of their insurance billings and challenges every church to make payments on time and in full. The committee thanks all of the churches that paid their premium in full by October 15, 2007 with the 9% discount or enrolled in the Automatic Clearinghouse Account process with a 7% discount through the OAS and Vanco Services, LLC.

For the upcoming renewal period, the Insurance Committee with the help of Fred C. Church, our agent, will provide the best coverage and rate possible for the 2008/2009 renewal period.

Finally, for more than 12 years, the Conference Unit Insurance Plan has provided economical comprehensive property, general liability, and Director's/Officers insurance for churches within the New England Conference. During that period, churches of the New England Conference have saved an estimated \$15 million in premium costs (compared to individual church purchase of similar coverage) that have been able to be used for direct ministry. The Conference Unit Insurance Plan is an example of our connectional life as a conference and how together, with God's help, we can do more than we can do separately.

Grace & Peace,  
Bruce Maxwell, Chairperson

## **ASSISTANT TO THE BISHOP/DIRECTOR OF CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES**

During a recent week, I convened a meeting concerning anti-racism work in our conference, conducted sessions with two local churches (one as an NCD coach and another concerning pastoral transition), participated in a conference call with the Board of Laity, attended a meeting with Unitarians in Boston, preached at a local church on Sunday morning, traveled to Vermont for a boundaries meeting, and have had more than a dozen telephone calls and meetings in Lawrence concerning budget and conference staff.

I understand that few in our conference know what people on the conference staff do, but the above is offered to illustrate the privilege I enjoy to be present in a wide variety of settings. My DCM responsibilities deal with oversight and coordination of programs and ministry of the Annual Conference. As Assistant to the Bishop, I continue to support various aspects of the Bishop's work.

As there were no changes in the Conference Staff "line up" in 2007 (in my areas of responsibility), I want to offer my thanksgiving to God and my heartfelt appreciation to these people who devote so much of their gifts and energies to support local church and conference ministries:

- ✓ Curtis Brown, director of congregational development
- ✓ Jennifer Carpenter, director of Camp Aldersgate
- ✓ Evelyn Johnson-Moore, coordinator of the parish consultants for the conference (our consultants include: Greg Carpenter, Stewart Lanier, Bonnie Marden, and Betsy Waters)
- ✓ Bonnie Marden, choreographer for the annual conference session (among many other ways she serves)
- ✓ Rosemary McNulty, is the administrative assistant for four of us (!), cares for the Resource Library of the Conference, and handles many other responsibilities in the conference center in Lawrence
- ✓ Jean and Michael Moore, co-directors of Wanakee United Methodist Center
- ✓ Larry Peacock, director of Rolling Ridge Retreat and Conference Center
- ✓ Wanda Stahl, director of Christian formation
- ✓ Norm Thombs, director of Camp Mechuwana
- ✓ Alexx Wood, director of communications

Each of these people is very dedicated to ministry on your behalf.

Finally, included in my areas of emphasis during 2007 have been: re-organizing Latino/Hispanic Ministries, re-invigorating anti-racism work, beginning the new Conference Visioning Table, supporting regional youth ministries and Board of Laity "academies", and coordinating the many other resourcing areas of our conference work. Again, I am grateful to be working with so many gifted people in Christ's Church.

James T. McPhee

## **DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN FORMATION**

I have been heartened during this past year by the number of individuals and churches being more intentional in nurturing the call to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This has been evidenced, in part, by the number of churches participating in the Natural Church Development process and the seriousness with which many are engaging in this process. In particular, I've had the privilege of working with congregations

seeking to strengthen their Passionate Spirituality, Gift-Oriented Ministry, and Holistic Small Groups. I have also been blessed by being able to work with clergy in a variety of settings as they seek to strengthen their own spiritual practices, which are the foundation for effective ministry in the name of Jesus Christ.

In September of 2007, we were able to offer training for youth leaders in two locations with David Burke. I'm in the process of exploring future options for such training, including some more in-depth models. The work of the Spiritual Formation Initiative (see their report for more detail) in this past year has helped make possible the Bishop's Day on Passionate Spirituality and the Clergy Spiritual Renewal Retreat. The group also developed and distributed our "Retreat in a Box" resource to local churches and districts for their use.

Other conference level commitments have also been part of my work for 2007-08. I continue to support the work of Rolling Ridge through supervision of the executive direction and participation on their Board of Directors. It has been exciting to see that ministry continuing to strengthen and grow. The Transformational Leadership Task Force has been meeting this spring to tighten up the pastoral evaluation process and begin work on a congregational evaluation process and tool. The Conference Visioning Table first came together in September 2007 and has been working on team building and coming to understand its role in conference leadership.

In the coming year, I am looking forward to work in the following areas, among others:

- Continuing leadership in the worship workshops begun this spring led by conference staff and other leaders
- Being part of the leadership team for our fourth Five-Day Academy for Spiritual Formation in October. The theme is Passionate Spirituality: Global Context, Bold Witness.
- Resourcing youth leaders in nurturing youth spiritual formation
- Continuing work with local churches, clusters, and districts through consultations, workshops and retreats in a variety of areas related to Christian formation

I'm appreciative of the many gifts God has given our conference. I pray that in the coming year is that we can continue to mobilize and strengthen these gifts to more faithfully and effectively minister to the needs outside of our church walls as we seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Respectfully submitted,  
Wanda J. Stahl

## **DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS**

I've just wrapped up my first full year as Director of Communications, and it has been a busy year! When I first came to the conference I reviewed our existing communications programs and resources, and I was pleased to find the SpiritNET newspaper and the e-newsletter communications (UMCatalyst and E-Clergy Connection) working well to deliver announcements and stories from around the conference. We've continued these media, making some adjustments on style and frequency, but overall they are good channels to keep us connected. I am grateful for the work of Joy Mueller on the e-newsletter editing and distribution, and Bert Whittier on editing and layout of the SpiritNET newspaper, as well as so many of you that submit stories for publication. My goal is to include more voices from around

the conference, so I would love to hear from you if you have a story to share or want to do some writing or reporting. I am also continuing the slow but steady work on making the conference web site more useable, informational, and inspirational. Look for more changes there in the coming months!

The biggest goals and blessings I've experienced in this past year are those that are directly related to helping local churches understand the information and resources that are available, and to help you create and implement simple yet powerful welcoming, outreach and evangelism (dare I say "marketing"?) programs that help spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ in your communities. I traveled about the conference with Curtis Brown, Wanda Stahl, and other staff for our district workshops we called "Sowing Hope", and it was a rich time of learning and sharing together. We are currently planning the next round of workshops which will be focused on offering ideas, tools and resources on the theme of "Worship in a New Day", to follow the Bishop's District Days on Worship this year. For those of you that attended these sessions in the past we hope to see you again. Please invite others to share in this rich time. And for those of you that haven't attended before, I invite you to join us!

I've also been involved in other leadership development activities such as presenting at the School of Congregational Development, the Metro Boston Leadership Academy, and even cluster workshops on topics like church web sites, marketing and outreach, technology in worship, and Igniting Ministries. I love this type of training and engagement, so if your church or cluster has a need please contact me. It is exciting for me to see and experience the wonderful things that are happening in our churches, and to have a role in supporting you and also telling your stories to encourage others.

Finally, I would continue to encourage every church to adopt and use the "Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors" message whenever and wherever you can in your local church communications. The supporting materials are available at no charge from United Methodist Communications, and it is important that we continue to strive for consistency in our messages. This is one simple but powerful way to do that. It is also important that we continue to strive to be the church that God is calling us to be, and although we may not be quite there yet, I believe we are moving onward toward the goal of truly being a people with Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors!

These are but a few of the ways I am privileged to serve with you. I welcome your ideas, comments, criticisms, celebrations, and stories. Please let me know how I can continue to serve and support you in living the Gospel and communicating God's abundant and transforming love to all. Each day I give thanks to God for the opportunity to be engaged in this ministry with all of you.

Alexx Wood, Director of Communications

## **TREASURER**

The Annual Conference and its churches saw the implementation during 2007 of several pieces of legislation passed at the 2006 Annual Conference session

Financially, receipts from Mission Shares exceeded 2006 by 3.13% (\$278,127). For the fourth straight year, we ended the year in a positive position by keeping expenses inline with actual receipts. With our practice of more closely tying future expenditure levels to past receipt levels, the Council on Finance and Administration has been supportive of the Office of

Administrative Ministries efforts to better manage the resources entrusted us by our members and local churches. While it will be necessary to continue to make difficult choices given our limited financial resources, the Annual Conference will continue to seek to be faithful to its mission and ministry.

There was a concern that did not materialize, that the move to the direct billing of pastor's pension and death/disability benefit would result in both a reduction in Mission Share receipts and generate potentially significant levels of pension arrearages. Mission Share receipts increased (when adjusted for direct billing of pensions) and arrearages related to pension billings was more than 50% lower than initially projected. As a total when we added the actual receipts from pension billings to local churches and mission share receipts from local churches, 2007 receipts exceeded 2006 apportioned receipts (which included pension) by more than \$1 million.

Currently more than 220 churches in the Conference utilize the ACH or EFT mode of payment. These churches are saving more than \$500,000 in aggregate that is available for local ministry and world mission. They are also, gaining greater control over their own cash flow.

Both of the conferences insurance programs were able to continue the recent trend of providing value for money. The property/liability insurance program's average increase passed on to the local churches of the Annual Conference in 2007 was 5.4%. When compared with securing similar coverage individually, local churches throughout the conference save in excess of \$3.7 million annually in combined premiums, money that is available for local church ministries. While health insurance premium increases within the industry averaged 8% - 10%, the cost passed on to the local churches of the Annual Conference was -1.25% lower than the prior year (for those taking advantage of the ACH payment option, their costs were -11.5% lower).

The Office of Administrative Ministries continued its efforts to find new, better, and more efficient ways to perform the administrative ministries of the Annual Conference. With the ever-growing regulatory, financial, and record-keeping requirements of the Conference's insurance and pension programs, the Office of Administrative Ministries in conjunction with the Conference Council on Finance and Administration engage a consulting firm to assess the needs of the Conference and provide a plan for addressing those needs. The report for the consults was due the first quarter of 2008. Our efforts to better manage the cash flow operations of the Annual Conference, completed over the summer of 2006, along with favorable interest rates resulted in an increase of more than \$140,000 in returns on our cash flows. This is additional money that is being used to support ministry and mission of the Annual Conference.

Finally, I can confidently report, once again this year, that this Annual Conference is being well served by a dedicated staff of individuals who graciously respond everyday to a myriad of requests for information and assistance out of their sense of Christian witness and calling. I sincerely appreciate the contributions to ministry made by:

- Janis Salesi, Conference Benefits Coordinator
- Steve Hart, Financial Services Manager
- Merry Hoyt, Remittance Specialist
- Deborah Cannella, Administrative Assistant
- Daniel Sierra, Accounts Payable/Payroll
- Thelma Phelan, Benefits Assistant

- Marion Grant, Administrative Financial Assistant, Capital Campaign  
I extend a special word of thanks to the members of the Council on Finance and Administration, Board of Pensions and Health Benefits, Equitable Compensation Committee and Conference Trustees with whom I have the privilege of working, the local church treasurers I have had the opportunity to talk with and meet, and my colleagues in Ministry through out the Conference who have kept and continue to keep me in their prayers.

Charles R. Carnahan, Treasurer/Director Administrative Services/Conference Benefits Officer

## **TOGETHER FOR TOMORROW**

December 2007 marked the halfway point for the seven Pilot Churches who kicked off the *Together for Tomorrow* Capital Campaign in Mid-2005 with anticipated completion of their campaigns in June 2010. The Block I churches in the Northern Maine and RISEM Districts are just a few months short of that mark, with anticipated completion dates in the Fall of 2010.

Overall, with an estimated completion for the whole campaign of May 2011 (with some exceptions), as of November 30, 2007 we were two and a half years, or 42%, into the campaign.

Net pledges as of December 31, 2007 amounted to \$15,494,983.05, with payments received as of November 30, 2007 in the amount of \$5,111,025.40, or 33%.

Of the \$5.1M received to date, \$1.75M has been disbursed back to the local churches as their Local Share, \$1.56M has been paid for expenses in running the campaign, and \$1.79M has been disbursed to or is being held for the other areas to benefit from the campaign. The breakdown of the \$1.79M is as follows:

Congregational Development	- \$394,886
Camps and Retreat Centers	- \$387,101
Pastoral Retirement Fund	- \$842,281
Nicaragua Covenant	- \$ 83,068
West Angola Covenant	- \$ 83,543

We have heard many wonderful stories from Local Churches as to how their Local Share is being used to promote mission and ministry in their communities and to fund much needed repairs to aging buildings so they can be used more effectively in helping to spread the Gospel and make disciples for Jesus Christ. Additionally, participation in the campaign has helped many local churches have in-depth conversations with their members about faithful stewardship disciplines, resulting in not only a successful local TFT Campaign but increased pledging during their regular stewardship campaigns.

As the funds for the other components to benefit from the campaign as listed above continue to come in, we will begin to see the projects dreamed about in the Campaign's "Case for Support" documents come to fruition. It has already been reported that the Wanakee UM Center in Meredith, NH has built their new shower house; and a portion of The Nicaragua Covenant funds has been used to purchase a medical van that enables medical teams to reach many more communities than previously. A team visited the West Angola Conference in January, and as a result of meetings held during that visit plans for how some of their funds will be used will be forthcoming in the near future.

We thank all who have participated in the success of this campaign thus far, and pray that the following statement, which is borrowed from an article from the West Chelmsford UMC featured in the Fall 2007 *Together for Tomorrow* Newsletter is true for all:

“The *Together for Tomorrow* campaign has helped us to better understand the connectional nature of Methodism, to be better stewards of the bounty we have, and to share that bounty with others. THAT is the true meaning of *Together for Tomorrow*.”

Respectfully submitted by  
Marion C. Grant, Administrative Financial Assistant

## **UNITED METHODIST FOUNDATION OF NEW ENGLAND**

In 2007-2008, stewardship education/training through the Foundation’s “Faith and Money” ministry has been the primary focus of our efforts. This biblically-based, year-round financial stewardship ministry was developed to help strengthen both personal and congregational stewardship in our local churches. Eight district training events were conducted with a total of 411 participants (including 113 clergy) representing 151 United Methodist churches attending. The feedback on these transformational stewardship workshops has been very positive. Many churches have requested follow-up assistance, and we are helping them develop plans to accomplish their church’s stewardship goals. Phase II of “Faith & Money” will use different delivery models including pilot projects in churches and the deployment of stewardship coaches and mentors.

“Faith & Money” is more than just a stewardship education ministry; it is viewed as a theological model that guides the work of the Foundation, serving as a vehicle through which all its services and ministries are delivered. Echoing the words of our Mission Statement, the goal of these services is to “...promote faithful stewardship” in congregations and individual lives.

Bonnie Marden was hired as our Development Associate to assist with our “Faith & Money” initiative. The Foundation’s Board of Directors also demonstrated its commitment to stewardship education and development by raising \$25,000 through a board appeal to support this ministry. Finally, the Foundation acquired the rights and permission to make available to all churches in the New England Conference a new stewardship resource entitled “Living for Giving” by Bishop Kenneth Carder. This resource, which uses the “Disciple Bible Study” format with video, study guide/workbook and life applications, will be a great complement to the “Faith & Money” ministry.

In addition to stewardship education, the Foundation also assists local churches with investing their endowed/reserve funds in socially responsible investment vehicles. The Foundation’s broadly diversified investment portfolio includes international, large cap, mid cap and small capitalization companies with a small holding in emerging markets. We are delighted to report that this strategy has had excellent returns; for example: for the year ended 12-31-07, the Foundation’s Stock Fund has outperformed the Standard and Poor’s 500 Index for the last quarter, 1-year and 3-year periods.

Recognizing that our churches desire their investment portfolios to reflect the gospel values and mission of the United Methodist Church, the Foundation adheres to a Socially Responsible Investing (SRI) policy for all its investments by excluding companies involved in the production of addictive products and services (tobacco, alcohol, and gambling industries), and the production of military weapons, as well as avoiding companies that demonstrate poor environmental stewardship or disregard for human rights. An example of our SRI involvement is the decision in 2007 to screen

out companies doing business in Sudan that were supporting and profiting from the well-documented campaign of genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan.

Our Foundation is also a leader among our denominational foundations in our efforts to use our proxy votes to consistently encourage companies to adhere to good social principles. Through our proxy voting activity, we join with other like-minded investors to positively impact the governance and ethical behavior of corporations. For these reasons, we believe that the Foundation's investment offerings are excellent long-term, socially responsible, and financially prudent options for our churches and conference agencies.

We express our appreciation and thanks to both our hard-working staff and a gifted Board of Directors, and especially acknowledge the service of the following directors who are leaving the board: Cindy Sroda (treasurer and budget & audit committee chair), Rev. Barbara Cann and Sophia Harrell. Members of the 2007 Board of Directors are:

**Officers/Committee Chairpersons:**

David W. Fitts, Board Chair

John R. Regier, Board Vice-Chair

Edward W. Abrahams III, Secretary and Chair of Grants & Financial Assistance Committee

Wesley Blair III, Treasurer and Chair of Budget/Audit Committee

Joan A. Humphrey, Chair of Personnel/Nominating Committee

Patricia Deyton, Chair of Development & Marketing Committee

Robert B. Needham, Chair of Investment Committee

**Board Members:**

Thomas J. Baziak

Philip Hall

Kristine Kelley

Rev. Wendell Luke, Jr.

Diane Peak

James Stephen

Rev. Charles Stith

Rev. Herbert Taylor

Rev. Ha-Kyung Cho-Kim

Stephen Ives

Marian Lippincott

Dave MacMahon

Kathleen Rood

Rev. Alexander Stewart, Jr.

M. Philip Susag

Bishop Peter Weaver

Respectfully submitted,  
Wee-Li Tan, President



United  
Theological  
Seminary

## **United Theological Seminary**

“Spirit Led, Renewing the Church!”

February 2008

It is a joy to send greetings on behalf of United Theological Seminary to the Annual Conferences within the United Methodist connection!

United Theological Seminary celebrates with you 137 years of service in the ministry of theological education since our founding in 1871. We are grateful to God for the privileges of equipping faithful leadership for the Church, leading in reflection on Wesleyan theology, and assisting the Church in making disciples of all nations! We seek the Holy Spirit's leading so that we may do our part in the renewal of the Church for the mission of Jesus Christ in the world!

Here are some current highlights from United Theological Seminary:

1. A new Master of Divinity degree Concentration in Church Renewal!
2. A continuing, central role for orthodox Christian doctrine and deep grounding in the study of the Bible.
3. An emphasis upon the world as our context for theological education, including the Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe.
4. New initiatives in Distance Learning to serve the underserved—including five new online courses in the fall of 2008!
5. Growing partnerships with African American church leaders and institutions.
6. New partnerships with other schools, judicatories, agencies and congregations!
7. An opportunity to lead the church in reflection on the Wesleyan theological tradition through the work of our faculty and the Center for Evangelical United Brethren Heritage.
8. Increasing enrollment in our Masters degrees, Doctor of Ministry degree and non-degree programs as we respond to new needs for clergy and lay education
9. Our fine students, faculty and staff!
10. A state-of-the-art, completely accessible campus.

We thank you for your ongoing partnership with us in the ministry of Jesus Christ!

Sincerely,

Wendy J. Deichmann Edwards, President

## **DREW UNIVERSITY THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL**

Drew Theological School is grateful that the annual conferences continue to send us men and women for the various programs of the school. We are proud of our United Methodist Scholarship that gives full tuition to any United Methodist who has been a member of a UM church for at least two years, has a 3.5 from their undergraduate program and meets our other requirements.

**Enrollment:** Our 560 students come from over 20 countries and across the United States. They are half men and half women, from 23 to 74 in age and in addition to the 70% who are from Methodist traditions they represent many other denominations. We offer the PhD, the DMin, STM, MDiv, MTS degrees and on going offerings for the larger community. More and more students are coming to Drew in their 20's with real commitments to justice and vital ministries. Rev. Kevin Miller continues to serve as Director of Admissions and can be reached via email at [kmiller@drew.edu](mailto:kmiller@drew.edu).

**Shalom Initiative:** As of January 1, 2008 Drew Theological is the new partner for the United Methodist initiative called "Communities of Shalom". Often referred to as "shalom zones", Communities of Shalom is a grass-roots, faith-based network of shalom sites that engage congregations and communities in working together for community development, peace, and wholeness. Starting this summer students will have the opportunity to experience intensive in context learning at sites across the United States. We have recently worked with religious leadership in around Newark to initiate a new program to work toward lessening gang violence in Newark. We have also joined with the religious leadership in Baltimore to creatively address the rising murder rate in that city. Dr. Michael Christensen, who has been Drew's director of the Doctor of Ministry program, is now serving as the director of this important community based initiative.

Beyond developing ministry relationships with churches and community organizations through student internships and training resources, “the Shalom Initiative also lets Drew relate to the General Conference and Annual Conferences of the United Methodist Church with our best foot forward—our social justice and prophetic witness work in the world,” according to Dr. Christensen.

**Clergy Health and Wholeness Center:** Associate Dean Virginia Samuel is working on the creation of an initiative to address the crises in the health of our clergy. The proposed Center for Clergy Health and Wholeness will respond to the precipitous decline in the overall mental, emotional, and especially physical health of active clergy members over the past 25 years. Through programming for clergy, denominational officials and seminary students, ongoing research in the area of clergy health, programs for laity to increase their awareness of the issues, and the facilitation of partnerships between and among judicatories, health professionals and health care systems, the Center will seek to educate and help clergy to adopt better self-care practices.

We distributed pedometers at a recent service to encourage our present students to become more aware of their need to get up and move. Rev. Samuel is also working with several annual conferences and leadership in boards and agencies for improved self care and healthy lifestyles for our clergy leadership.

**Center for Christianities in Global Contexts:** The Henry Luce Foundation has given us a grant to establish the Center for Global Christianities, and Dr. Elizabeth Tapia originally from the Philippines is serving as the director. This program seeks to understand what is happening to Christianity globally as well as the various manifestations of the faith that have come to the United States with new immigrant communities. It allows three PhD students to serve as Luce Fellows in relationship to their graduate work in a theological discipline.

**Seminary Hall Update:** Over the past several years the major building of the theological schools has been under construction. Plans are in place to finish the work on Seminary Hall this coming summer.

**United Methodist Liaison Contact:** Rev. Jeff Markay, an elder in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, continues to serve as our liaison with the United Methodist Church and its ordination process. He is available to all our United Methodist students from various annual conferences.

Maxine Clarke Beach, Dean - [www.drew.edu](http://www.drew.edu)

## **GAMMON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY - ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

Gammon Theological Seminary is one of thirteen accredited theological institutions of The United Methodist Church. Gammon is the only historically African American graduate theological school related to the United Methodist Church.

Gammon will celebrate its 125<sup>th</sup> year of founding this year during the annual Founders' Day and Thirkield-Jones Lecture Series, October 6-9, 2008. “Remembering Who We Are: Seeking New Pathways” is our theme for our 125<sup>th</sup> celebration. Bishop Violet Fisher will serve as our Founders' Day Worship Service Speaker and Bishop Gregory Palmer will serve as our guest lecturer for the Thirkield-Jones Lecture Series. A Founders' Day Banquet and Gala will be held during this event to honor the alumni who have matriculated at Gammon and served The United Methodist Church for the last 125 years. The Methodist Episcopal Church founded Gammon Theological Seminary in 1883. Bishop Gilbert Haven and the officers of the Freedmen's Aid Society had purchased nearly 500 acres of high

land in the southern suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia. Gammon initially began as a Department of Theology at Clark University. Through the efforts of Bishop Henry White Warren and the gift of \$20,000 for endowment from the Rev. Elijah H. Gammon, a Methodist minister of the Rock River (Illinois) Conference. The enthusiasm of these two men led to the construction of Gammon Hall. The Rev. Wilbur Patterson Thirkield was elected dean, and Gammon School of Theology was officially opened on October 3, 1883.

Gammon is the United Methodist member of the consortium of theological schools, known across the world as The Interdenominational Theological Center located in Atlanta, Georgia. We offer a broad curriculum in the scholar-minister tradition and also offers a holistic educational experience that continues to stress scholarship and service.

Students prepare for administration and leadership, counseling, teaching and preaching and a range of other spiritual and secular roles, with a blend of scholarship in the classroom and practical experience in the community. The interdisciplinary curriculum integrates theological studies with preparation for the ministry, merging theory with practice to equip the student for scholarship in the academy, service in the parish, and leadership in the community. Degree programs offered are Master of Divinity; Master of Arts in Christian Education; Master of Arts in Church Music; Dual Degrees and Doctor of Theology and Doctor of Ministry with a Specialty In Pastoral Counseling;

Madelyn C. Greene, Alumni & Student Affairs Director  
404/581-0310: mgreenegammon@bellsouth.net

## **METHODIST CONFERENCE HOME, INC. - Rockland, Maine**

The mission of Methodist Conference Home is to support older adults and people with disabilities in mid-coast Maine with appropriate services that will enhance their independence and promote self-sufficiency. This mission is firmly rooted in the teachings of Christ and the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church.

MCH continues to offer affordable senior housing provided at the Methodist Home, Rankin Center and Stevens House, all in Rockland, Maine. We also manage the Knox Hotel Apartments, a 29 unit subsidized older adult housing facility in Thomaston and the Bartlett Woods Cooperative, 14 duplex cottage units in Rockland. During the year we were able to do some major work at Rankin Center, replacing all of the windows in the building and doing a major upgrade to the building façade and the storefronts in the section that houses the Brown Bag Restaurant. All in all we provide housing for approximately 150 individuals.

Our facilities offer independent living apartments along with a program of supportive services that make it possible for individuals to extend that independence for as long as possible. These services include housekeeping, meals, transportation and personal care, among others. Because of state budget deficits we are losing funding for our service program at the Knox Hotel Apartments in the next state fiscal year. The program under which it was funded has been discontinued. The program is currently serving seven individuals. Finding other funding for these services will be a challenge.

Our transportation subsidiary, Coastal Trans, continues to grow, although we experienced some serious financial challenges during the past year relating to problems with the state's Medicaid reimbursement program, unexpectedly high vehicle maintenance costs and the need to deliver services more efficiently. By cutting some operating costs and reducing staff hours we expect to break even in the coming year. Coastal Trans, served 1983

individuals in the three counties we cover, and provided more than 2.1 million passenger miles of transportation.

The Meals on Wheels program that we operate in Knox County continues to be in great demand. We deliver approximately 100 meals a day, five days a week to homebound individuals in the county and also serve meals to another 40 individuals at senior meal sites. This program requires a great deal of community support, but the community continues to be generous with that support.

One of our major successes in 2007 came in the area of fundraising. We were able to increase giving from individuals, businesses and other local organizations by 50% over 2006.

MCH is grateful for the continued support of the New England Annual Conference through the Golden Cross offering, the gifts of churches and individuals, gifts of time given by Board members and other volunteers and the prayers of many throughout the Conference.

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## **ROLLING RIDGE RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER**

Nearly 5000 adults, youth and children walked the holy grounds or stayed in the gracious manor at Rolling Ridge in 2007. We witnessed a 20 percent increase in participants and revenue as we continue to reach out to more individuals and groups.

Rolling Ridge offered 30 programs during the year, including the popular, "A Day Apart for Busy People", our monthly drumming circle, and a new eight-month spiritual formation program called, Drawing Near to God. Oasis - A Spiritual Spa week attracted people from as far away as California. Our fall retreat brought author Linda Douty to Rolling Ridge. Our room set aside for private retreatants has seen increased use by both laity and clergy. We also co-sponsored several programs with other groups that helped us reach a wider audience.

Our summer programs for youth- junior and senior high were well attended and we added a new weekend retreat for older elementary students that gave them a taste of the Ridge and for many their first experience of Christian camping. We served the region by hosting the youth leaders training day and youth festival.

We communicate our programs and services through weekly emails, twice yearly program books and several newsletters. Weekend retreats are now booked almost a year in advance as more people have discovered Rolling Ridge. Summer picnics and the swimming

pool remain popular with churches and local service organizations. We welcome your calls as we seek to be a place nourishing community and spiritual growth.

The Board of Directors this year has taken steps toward redoing the entrance and road into Rolling Ridge and engaging a professional fund development company to conduct a feasibility study as we move toward the Master Plan and the renovation and new facilities at Rolling Ridge.

Thank you for your prayers and donations to Rolling Ridge. We are a Conference Advance Special and welcome you gifts. This year we have continued to paint, refurnish and improve the facilities thanks to donations from many. We are grateful for the funds which have come through the Together for Tomorrow campaign and have used them to repair the roof and start the road project.

In 2008, we shall celebrate 60 years of service to the church. Someone estimated that nearly a half million youth have had their lives touched by God at Rolling Ridge. We want to celebrate the past and lean into the future with hope and joy. We hope you will join us for our Celebration Weekend, September 19-21.

Please continue to hold us in your prayers as we develop programs, improve facilities, move into a development program and offer Christ-like hospitality all.

Cynthia Good, Chairperson, Board of Directors  
Larry J. Peacock, Executive Director

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